

The late lamb marketing started here at the ranch. Goat Whiskers the Younger moved his crew in to help. Pickups and trailers had to be parked in special rows to keep from shutting down the horse trap.

Ages of ground and mounted help ran from nine years to the late 60s. Whiskers brought along his two daughters to provide the anti-discrimination protection. Three of my sons were out of school from the weekend. We were in such a rush to beat the school bells that I'd have haired a CPA to count sheep. had one come by the corrals.

Young Whiskers served as general critic of the operation. He rode horseback to be on hand at every mechanical and four legged breakdown. As much as possible, I sent him and his girls together to occupy his time shouting at them to hurry up or slow down as the cases arose to move the ewes and lambs.

I learned a long time ago that making a roundup work in unison is impossible. After the oldtimers began to retire, I stopped expecting men to stay in line, or for that matter stay in the same pasture as the work.

Directing the modern sheep and cow scatterings requires a new philosophy. Bosses have to learn that men too far ahead can be balanced out by the ones that are too far behind. As the hands seesaw back and forth, some spurring and some day dreaming, at given times everyone is in place. The secret is to overlook the rest of the day. Often 15 minutes of perfection will offset 12 hours of complete disorganization.

From our ranch we moved over to Young Whisker's operation. The mounted force was reduced by five riders. Whiskers' determination increased to the optimum. South winds were blowing so hard that the sparrows nests under the barn eaves were losing eggs with every blast. All our school kids were gone. Our boss and director was making no allowances for the wind or the decrease in help.

Without his girls to shout at, he used me as a tranquilizer. Every time I'd ride over to talk to another hand, he made curt remarks and issued abrupt orders.

Part of the thrill of a roundup is talking and visiting. I think I told you about the rime one of my compadres in South Texas got mad because I entertained one of his cowboys so thoroughly that we lost 20 head of calves on the tail end of the herd.

We were riding along together in brush 10 feet high. I was telling him the tale of Liver Eating Johnson, the great Indian fighter. Along about the part where Johnson turner into a cannibal, the old kid's horse snorted at a rattlesnake and that was when we realized that we were riding in the herd instead of behind it.

I had to take the blame. Actually, old Liver Eating Johnson was responsible. I was just retelling a story. I wasn't eating Indian livers or scalping wild men.

The further the work goes, the more touchy Whiskers becomes. I suggested this morning that he might like to stop to celebrate the big Mexican holiday, the fifth of May. He acted like he didn't hear, but I know he did as he put on a hot scowl that would have scared a fellow that didn't know him too well.

We had a lot of fun working the kids. Every morning I miss them playing and throwing rocks. Whiskers is so serious that I don't dare make any jokes. Sixty cent lambs sure change the theme. I imagine by fall they'll be down to a more relaxed figure. Booms never hit the Shortgrass Country that a man can't outlast. Some day I'll tell you the tale of Liver Eating Johnson. It'll have to be after a roundup, or somebody will be mad.